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Contact: Bill Adams

Tel.: (202) 366-5580

Statement by U.S. Secretary of Transportation Federico Peña On Signing of Maritime Security Act

With the stroke of a pen today, President Clinton ensured America's future as a maritime nation. The Maritime Security Act will enable the United States to continue as an active participant in its own maritime future and ensure that American ships, crewed by loyal, skilled American civilian seafarers, will continue to be available to support our armed services.

American shipping companies have been the innovators in developing and implementing the intermodal technologies which have revolutionized the transportation industry. The Maritime Security Act will help maintain the United States as a transportation leader.

The Maritime Security Act authorizes funding of up to \$100 million annually for up to 47 vessels. It requires participating shipowners to enroll in an Emergency Preparedness Program established to provide sealift support in time of war or national emergency.

In addition to the economic value of maintaining U.S.-flag shipping services, the United States will receive other benefits from this partnership. Participants in the Maritime Security Program will make their worldwide intermodal networks available to the Department of Defense. These include not only the carriers' vessels, but also trains, trucks, cargo handling equipment, and tracking and control systems -- as well as traffic and logistics management services.

I want to thank members of Congress from both political parties for passing the legislation, applaud maritime labor organizations and U.S.-flag carriers for their efforts to move ahead with maritime reform, and credit Maritime Administrator Albert J. Herberger and the Maritime Administration staff for their invaluable contribution to the future of the United States.

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